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## RECENT CHANGES IN THEOLOGY IN THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

A series of articles on the theological changes in the various ecclesiastical bodies of Christendom must have been interesting, if they presented with scholarly care and intelligent sympathy the changes brought about by the rapid progress of thought which has characterized the last forty years; and the articles which have preceded this have fulfilled the splendid promise of such a series.

It could not but be clear to anyone following the course of scientific and theological thinking, and particularly the developments of the historical and higher criticism of the Bible, that sooner or later that criticism and its results must enter into the thinking and living of the churches, certainly in great democratic communities like England and America. In Germany, owing to the character of its institutional life, it was for many years possible to hold within the circle of the universities—or perhaps one should say within that of scholars, scientists, and philosophers—the implications and results of scientific and historical investigation into religious documents and problems, as well as into those problems of things and of mind which bear upon theology. Such a condition would be impossible in America, both because of the intellectual democracy which characterizes American life, and also because of that attribute of the American mind which Guizot has pointed out as having been once the peculiar attribute of the French mind. Says Guizot:

There is in the genius of the French something of a sociableness, of a sympathy—something which spreads itself with more facility and energy than in the genius of any other people. . . . Their ideas, being more popular, present themselves more clearly to the masses, penetrate among them with greater ease. . . . In a word, clearness, sociability, sympathy are the particular characteristics of France, of its civilization.

As in France, so in America, the mind of the people is characterized, not only by the ease and rapidity with which ideas and sympathies penetrate and diffuse themselves through the whole social body, but

<sup>1</sup> By request of the author, and for special reasons, the *Journal* departs from its usual rule and publishes this article anonymously.

by a kind of practical logic which commits the active life of the people to the ideas of the intellect and the aspirations of the spirit. It is impossible for a vital democracy like ours long to hold ideas in the mind without expressing them in daily life. The churches have already come—or, if they have not already come, are rapidly coming—to recognize the pervading force of great sympathies and ideas, and the consequent necessity that they seek for an adjustment of the daily feeling and life of the people, especially of their own members, to the discoveries and the ideas of the intellect. Such adjustment will come anyway, but it is the duty of the church to aid in making it true. Churches are *per se* the most conservative of human institutions. They are, like all other forms of human institution, historical growths, but perhaps more than others they derive the main body of their vital content and of their appeal to men from their rootage in history. They all have a common origin in ideas and events which were uttered or which happened nineteen hundred years ago, and these ideas and events largely determine the intellectual content of Christian thought. Again, though churches have at times failed to perceive the necessarily universal inclusiveness of their thinking and their work, yet that inclusiveness has been, whether or not consciously perceived, a fundamental necessity; and that makes them conservative institutions. They cannot quickly accept and incorporate into themselves new discoveries, ideas, and forces, lest they commit themselves to ephemeral error, and so alienate the conservative temperament and judgment which are characteristic of so large a body of the people. They must also be slow in committing themselves even to new truths, because the popular mind is slow in apprehending truth, and their fundamental appeal is to populate feeling and judgment. They are, consequently, under special obligation to “prove all things and hold fast that which is good.” They must retain the approved old, and must be sympathetic to the new. They must be rooted deep in the past, and must have large power of sympathetic and vital assimilation of the present.

From these considerations affecting the church in general we proceed, in studying the theological changes in the Episcopal church, to the query as to what that church really is, how she defines herself, and what she apprehends to be the law of her organization and life.

She is historically the daughter of the Church of England, and the fundamental concepts of her life are those of the life of the mother-church. Two concepts may be selected from a number determining and describing the church as a whole, and as related to particular peoples, which are primary and fundamental in determining and describing the Anglican church: first, historic continuity of idea and organization from the New Testament church to the present time; and, secondly, the expression by the historically continued church of the essential religious genius and life of the people or of the state. The Anglican church claims authenticity by reason of historical continuity with New Testament Christianity, and by reason of her true and vital expression of the life and genius of the English state. We need not enter here into the disputed question of the validity of that claim, of the regularity of episcopal ordination, and the legitimacy of ecclesiastical continuity of the church in England previous to the Reformation, or into the question of the determinative or the non-determinative character of the work of Henry VIII. Suffice it to say that the English church claims to have existed, completely and historically organized, with episcopal supervision and through episcopal ordination, before that time when the Church of Rome made as the essential test of catholicity the consecration of bishops and the ordination of priests by specific consent and with the specific authorization of the bishop of Rome. The Church of England assents to the Roman proposition that the historic continuity of the church is conditioned upon the transmission of doctrine and orders from that early episcopal order which, though it was historically an evolution of the presbyterate, fell heir, according to the theory, to apostolic authority and function. There is, to be sure, a large body of the Church of England which lays very little stress upon this material symbol of historic continuity, but there can be no question that the Anglican church as an official body is committed in one form or another to the idea that the historical continuity of organization and doctrine has been maintained and expressed in an unbroken chain of inherited beliefs from the theology of Jesus, John, and Paul, and a consecutive series of ordinations from those of Timothy and Titus to the present time. It would be interesting, if there were space within the limits of this article, to ascertain how the various parties in the

church, particularly the broad-church party, have interpreted this conception of historic continuity. We may stop only to mention one interpretation which illustrates the ingenuity of the intellect in interpreting old doctrines in the terms of modern consciousness of reality. According to this interpretation, the historic episcopate means in the church what pride of ancestry means in the family: it transmits ideals and functional sentiments. It is a kind of ecclesiastical analogy to the legal conception that a man may be judged only by his peers. Bishops as bishops and priests as priests are, and they only are, competent to transmit the functional obligations and sentiments of their office, the norms both of doctrine and function which belong to their office. But in whatever sense this conception of historic continuity is held in the Anglican church, it is a fair statement that the Anglican claim to be a branch of the Catholic church is founded primarily upon this conception of historic continuity in thought and in ordered organization.

The other concept, true and vital expression of the life of the state, is one which is not primarily churchly or theological in its nature, but has been evolved out of the growth of nations. According to Anglican principle, this conception of a state church is not, however, an arbitrary hypothesis or weapon forged out of immediate necessity to justify the separation in the time of Henry VIII. The claim is that in the state churches of pre-Reformation days the necessity of true and vital expression by the church of the religious life of a people or a state, and a large power in the rulers of the state to determine the personnel of church organization, were recognized as a part of the certification and working policy of the Catholic church for centuries before the Reformation schism. Nevertheless, it is not claimed that the state-church idea is any part of the New Testament tradition, but rather an evolution from political necessity after the disintegration of the Roman Empire as the political expression of the Catholic church.

We now come to a more definite characterization of the Anglican church, and hence of the Episcopal church. Properly speaking, the Anglican church, according to her own doctrine, is not a church at all, but is a branch of the Catholic church, her catholicity being determined by historic continuity, and her actual organization by the necessity of true expression of the religious life of the English

people. These ideas of theoretical catholicity and of national limitation are fundamental to an understanding of the doctrinal position of the Anglican church and her daughters throughout the world. To repeat, the Anglican church is not a church, but a branch of the Catholic church, and the Catholic church is in a state of suspense. That church does not practically exist in the world today, the reason being that catholicity is not only historical continuity, but actual universality; and no church fulfils these two conceptions of catholicity. The schism of the Greek from the Roman church and of northern European Christianity from Latin terminated the actual material existence of the Catholic church, or rather suspended it. These three great divisions of the church have no means of communication and common action. We may describe the situation, speaking in terms of law, thus: The Anglican church, like the Roman and like the Greek, is unable to get a quorum, and therefore unable to act. Not even a quorum, however, would fully satisfy the demand of catholicity, that demand involving universality of time and place and unanimous consent—*quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ab omnibus*. Consequently, the Anglican church is unable either to make or to modify doctrine. She is bound as respects doctrine to the last utterance of the materially existing Catholic church—in other words, to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. To be sure, she uses the so-called Athanasian Creed; but that creed, though it probably originated in Gaul as early as the beginning of the sixth century, perhaps in the middle of the fifth (for it seems to have been commented upon by Venantius Fortunatus of Poitiers) — before the final schism between the Greek and the Roman churches, which did not occur till 787—was due largely to the influence of the Augustinian school and was never officially used by the Greek church, never having been acted upon by any of the ecumenical councils. It did, however, find its way into some portions of the Greek church in Europe in the eleventh or the twelfth century. Schaff calls it the last of the ecumenical symbols, but it certainly is not officially such. The Anglican church also uses the Thirty-Nine Articles, which are subsequent to the second great schism; but those articles issued out of a certain necessity for the restatement of theology under the concept of a state church, and also out of a desire of the leaders of the church in England at the time of

the Reformation to harmonize as far as possible the theology of the Anglican church with the theology of the Reformation, though great care was exercised neither to destroy the Catholic faith nor to add anything thereto. According, then, to a rigorous interpretation of her own fundamental principles, the Anglican church is in the last resort bound by, and only by, those doctrines which were formulated and officially accepted before the schism between the eastern and western churches. Strictly speaking, the Apostles' Creed itself is not a catholic creed; that is to say, it was never used by the Greek church, and there is no evidence that in its making the Greek church had any voice. It first originated in Rome, in a simpler form than we now have it, and we know the earliest form of that creed under the appellation of "The Old Roman Symbol." It was slowly enriched by the amplification of old clauses and the addition of new, but that process went on entirely in the western church. However, its theological identity with the Nicene Creed, and the fact that its use in the western church has never been objected to by the eastern church, permit us to treat it as a catholic creed.

Creed-growth in the Anglican church is thus inhibited, because the Catholic church of which she is a part is in a state of suspense. Nevertheless, the very origin of the Anglican church as actually and officially a state church, and the necessity of relating the church both to the religious life and thinking of the English people and to the religious life and thinking of continental Europe, required a means and method of expressing that relation. She could not change her creed, and she was consequently obliged to resort to an increase of the function of interpretation. Only by such increase of that function was she able to justify her desire both to be in harmonious relation with the reformed thought and life of Europe, and to adapt herself to the rapidly developing and growing experience and thought of the English people. The Reformation, both on the continent and in England, was not merely a reformation of religious doctrine and practice, but was the result of an aspiration for intellectual and spiritual democracy. Its origin was due as much to the intellectual renaissance of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as to the moral awakening of the sixteenth century; and it therefore became necessary for the English church to respond quickly to the aspirations and

movements of the intellectual and spiritual democracy which was so rapidly developing, and with which, if she was to live and grow in it at all, she must be in ready and vital sympathy.

The method of this increase of the function of interpretation was, in accordance with the English national genius, the rise and interaction of parties—the High Church and Low or Broad Church parties; and these parties in the church were expressions in the ecclesiastical and theological sphere of party spirits and conceptions of which the national life in general was made up, and with which the student of political and social history among all peoples is familiar. The High Church party was that party which insisted with special force on the centralized and authoritative dogma of catholicity, and from the very beginning of the Anglican church as a state church has never been reconciled to the schism either from Roman or from Greek Christianity, holding itself in an attitude of more or less patient waiting for the material restoration of that universalized and centralized body of the Catholic church by which dogma shall be made all-definite and all-compelling. That party accepted the schism from Rome on the ground of political necessity, and because by its nature and instinct it could hold itself with passionate devotion true to a series of dogmatic official pronouncements, though the voice that uttered them had become silent. It must have definite and rigid authority, and because of that necessity it was able to live upon a definite, though ancient, conception of catholicity, and upon the hope of the future realization of a church which should again universally and materially express that conception. This party did not come immediately after the separation of the Anglican church from the Church of Rome into full consciousness of itself. It was implicitly in the mind and genius of the English people, but did not come to a conscious recognition of itself till, by force of reaction from the Presbyterian and Puritan movement in England during the time of Laud, it became more or less a definitely organized party within the church. The dominant ecclesiastical influence in the English Reformation was that of the Low or Broad Church party, restrained, however, by the native tendency of the English mind to compromise. It is pertinent to remember, in view of much of the discussion which is going on now, that the Anglican church as a state church did not commit



herself formally, or perhaps one may say even implicitly, to the conceptions which underlie today the High Church position. Presbyterianism, certainly as a form of thought, if not of polity, was officially recognized in the Anglican church in the days before Laud. Practical provision was made, for example, for Presbyterian worship in parish churches in the afternoon, and freedom of conscience both as to doctrine and polity was widely recognized.

And in this connection it should also be noted that, though the Catholic creeds were accepted as sufficient and authoritative statement of Christian belief, it is nevertheless true that the Protestant doctrine of the Scriptures as the final resort for the testing of belief had wide acceptance, and really underlay much of the Reformation movement in England. The proof of this statement is found in Article VI of the Articles of Religion, in its provision that whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, "nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Earlier even than that is the provision in the ordinal that bishops and priests are required, "out of the Holy Scriptures to instruct the people" committed to their charge, and "to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation" but that which they "shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture." The Ordinal and the Article both show convincingly how important and how fundamental to the English Reformation and to the organization of the state church was Scripture authority—indeed, how exclusive that authority was of any other authority which might be in contradiction with it. Furthermore, attention should be called to the official recognition here given of the large function of interpretation accorded, not simply to the church as a whole, but to the individual bishop or priest. Indeed, it may be said that, though the church conceived herself bound by the utterances of the Catholic church, she conceived herself so bound only by reason of the admitted fact that those creeds were and must be in accord with the Holy Scriptures, and must contain nothing as requisite and necessary to salvation which the bishop or priest was not persuaded could be concluded and proved therefrom. All of this goes to show the decisive influence of the Low or Broad Church party, the characterization of which, apart from this citation

of its fruits, is reserved to the discussion of the Episcopal church in particular.

We now come to the Protestant Episcopal church, and we note two remarkable conditions which govern the formation, if one may so term it, of the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States of America: First, the necessity of bringing the church into accord with the political conditions incident to the establishing of a new nation independent of England, the church consequently to some extent independent of the English church. The demand for catholicity was as strong in the establishment of the Episcopal church as it had been in the reformation of the English church; and the same ideas with respect to the Catholic church as a whole obtained in the establishment of the Episcopal church which had obtained in the reformation of the state church of England; with the exception, however, of the new doctrine of the total and necessary separation of the state from the church. It was considered as important that the Protestant Episcopal church represent the religious genius of the American people as it had been that the English state church represent the religious genius of the English people; but that representation was to be strictly moral and spiritual, not political and official. The second condition was that created by the new spirit of religious toleration which animated the founders of the republic. It was probably not with full consciousness on the part of the church that this sentiment of religious toleration and breadth with which the founders of the republic were inspired influenced so positively as it did the doctrinal origin, if one may so speak, of the Protestant Episcopal church.

But that such influence was of great force in the formative processes of the Episcopal church is clearly evident both in the discussions and in the conclusions of the Convention of 1789. That convention, after long and exhaustive discussion, distinctly refused to be bound by the Thirty-Nine Articles; and also took another remarkable step, the importance of which has not been recognized in current discussion as to the theological position of the Episcopal church, and particularly as to the large interpretative function which she accords, not simply to bishops and clergy, but to lay people as well. The step to which we refer is the change in the formula of creed

subscription in the Baptismal Office, which is the primal, the only official creed-subscription of the Episcopal church. In the "Order for Baptism" in the English Prayerbook the formula of creed subscription reads: "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth? And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord? And that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary;" etc—each article of the creed being stated as categorical fact, with subscription thereto specifically required. The Convention of 1789 changed that form to the simple form: "Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed?" That form of creed-subscription was taken by the convention from the Presbyterian formula, and is therefore to be interpreted, not by Anglican, but by Presbyterian, theological history. Presbyterian scholars are unanimous in their agreement that that form does not require explicit and detailed acceptance of each article or statement either of the Westminster Confession or of the Longer or Shorter Catechism, but only of all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the Confession and in the Longer and Shorter Catechisms. Whether or not the Convention of 1789 was definitely conscious of the importance of this change is not to the point. The important fact is that the change was deliberately made, and can hardly have been made without some intelligent purpose. A curious error is frequently made in the statement that the Thirty-Nine Articles constitute a part of the creed of the Protestant Episcopal church, because they are found bound within the covers of the Prayerbook. Such a step was never taken by the Episcopal church. The convention of 1801 simply ordered their printing and binding within the covers of the Prayerbook as an established statement of the Articles of Religion, but with no official action incorporating those articles into the liturgy, which, and which only, expresses the doctrinal requirements of the church.

These two facts are most important, and indicate clearly how deep and forceful upon the organizers of the Protestant Episcopal church was the influence of the Broad Church sentiment of the founders of the republic. They also indicate a keen and vital response on the part of the church to the spiritual as well as political democracy out of which the republic issued.

But before taking up the interpretative development of the ideas of the creeds, we note the continuation in the Episcopal church of the method of development characterizing the Anglican church; namely, growth and influence of parties. We have sufficiently characterized the High Church party in England to have characterized it also in America; but the Low or Broad Church party, which we have for convenience treated as one, is not and has not been one. The Low Church party was in its origin really a Protestant party, and was in an important sense even more conservative than the High Church party. Philosophically considered, no more rigidly Protestant party has ever existed in any Christian body than the Low Church party in England and America. Its position with reference to the church idea was rather negative than positive. It denied the High Church claims concerning the church; and, while it accepted the Catholic creeds and used them, it denied any authority belonging to them by reason of the evolution of Christian belief and experience, but limited their authority only to an unelastic, iron-clad conception of the total theological sufficiency of the Scriptures. The Low Church party existed, for most of the years of its history, mainly by means of protest. Though springing from the democratic and social impulse, allied by sympathy to a progressive political and social democracy, and on that side of it an expression of liberalism in social and political, and somewhat also in intellectual, life; on the other side of it it was in some degree unprogressive, iconoclastic, and reactionary. No more curious anomaly in the intellectual and moral constitution of a social or religious party ever existed in the world than that which has characterized the Low Church party in the Church of England and in the Protestant Episcopal church—a party politically liberal, anxious to voice and express the social aspirations of democratic society, yet theologically unelastic and non-progressive. It is easy to see that, as soon as the world became unified under the reign of science and commerce, its thought focusing at every important center; as soon as the various departments of life and activity came to be recognized as simply fields of operation of the one human spirit, such an anomaly in a party must have become *impossible*: and the fact is, the party was destroyed. Only here and there are small coteries of individuals and parish churches that are

held by the intellectual and spiritual conceptions of the old Low Church party. As a vital force in the evolution of the church's life and thought it is dead, and has been largely replaced by the Broad Church party, or, as it is perhaps better named, movement.

It is not, however, meant by the foregoing to say that the Broad Church movement originated after the death or disintegration of the Low Church party; for Broad Churchmanship has always existed. It is not a party, not a code, or a creed, but an ideal and a spirit; and that ideal and spirit have existed and operated in the church from New Testament times till the present day. But as a definitely recognized force in the evolution of Christian and church thought Broad Churchmanship may be said to have come into being in very recent times. Allied at first with, and taking many of its premises from the Low Church party, it declined to accept the politico-ecclesiastical conception of the church as an organization, and laid its chief emphasis, not upon doctrines which are characteristic of High Churchmanship, but upon the social and spiritual principles of religion and their practical application to the daily life of men; yet it differentiated itself essentially from Low Churchmanship by its recognition in the realm of theology of the same laws and forces, the same conceptions and ideals, the same spiritual aspirations and influences, which animate and govern the political, economic, and social realms of thought and life (the lack of which recognition in Low Churchmanship resulted in that curious anomaly which has been noted), and also by a richer and more vital conception of the church than that held by Low Churchmen. It originated partly in the new social consciousness which began to characterize English and American religious life about the middle of the nineteenth century, and partly also in the new intellectual and religious consciousness which resulted from the increased control by science of the thought and life of men. Springing as it did from so complex a situation, reacting from much that it found in both of the existing parties, yet sympathizing with and sharing some of the principles of both, it was in the best sense eclectic and spiritual, both in principle and method. Its genius was necessarily comprehensive. It refrained from organization, aiming to infuse new spirit and power into the doctrines it found, and to apply them to the practical life of men. It was a new

humanism, derived from a new consciousness of God and man; and consequently it rather called into the deeper nature of man for his own religious truths, than applied artificially God's truths to man. Though out of it came the Christian-Socialist movement in England, it was at first more spiritual than concrete in its methods. Its great leaders believed in preaching. They conceived of their work as taking the great truths of God, and showing them to be the great truths of man, and the great truths of man to be those of God. They aimed to interpret in the light of the new social and scientific consciousness the spiritual values of religion, of the life of man, and of the natural world; and thus to make the Broad Church principle and method an agent in the process of religious and theological interpretation, and in that of realizing the spiritual democracy of the kingdom of God. But to do that Broad Churchmanship had to grasp and fuse together the essential truths of Low Church ecclesiastical democracy and of High Church faith in the church. It had to conceive of the church as both free and vital—truly democratic, in that she gives to the individual heart and mind free access to God and to truth; and truly sovereign, in that she has the compelling power of vital organization by and through the forever indwelling spirit of God.

So much has been said of the Broad Church movement, because mainly through and by means of that movement the process of interpretation of creeds has been carried on in the Episcopal church; and that fact is due to three fundamental descriptive characteristics—the conception of religious development by evolution as well as by revelation, profound sympathy with universal humanity, and love of truth. These characteristics are themselves, however, the result of three great propositions of faith, two of which at least are cardinal faith-propositions of the Episcopal church—faith in God, faith in the incarnation, and faith in man as the child of God. The conception of the church is in a sense hardly less important than the other principles of Broad Churchmanship; but as distinct from the High Church conception, which practically co-ordinates the church with the other objects of faith, the Broad Church conception is of the church as an agency and method of realizing other, and perhaps higher, ends. It may be said to be regulative rather

than determinative of thought and activity, providing not an end, but a means. Certainly it has conditioned in an important degree the course of theological development in the Anglican and Episcopal churches, serving as a regulative concept for that development, which naturally ran along the lines of the Catholic creeds and was concerned with the specific statements of those creeds as church utterances, rather than with the more abstract theological dogmas with which Protestant thought has been so much concerned. Of course, Protestantism has exercised, by reason of the Protestant element in both the Anglican and Episcopal churches, positive influence upon their thought, and there has been at certain times in their history a general consensus as to the more abstract doctrines of Christian theology, such as the fall, sin, atonement, predestination, inspiration, etc.; but, with the exception of that time and spirit in the history of the Anglican church out of which the Thirty-Nine Articles grew, it may be said that those churches have never had an official doctrine of sin, or of the atonement, or of predestination, other than that expressed in the Prayerbook; and that can be elicited only in the form of interpretation. The Episcopal church in particular has never had any official, other than Prayerbook, doctrine pertaining to those matters; though in sermons and theological essays by churchmen those matters have been treated as revealed theological propositions, or in the light of the evolution of the Christian consciousness; but a general consensus has always been unofficial. It may be pertinent right here to say that the pronunciamento of the bishops, issued a few years ago, declaring that fixity of interpretation is of the essence of the creed, is entirely out of accord with the historic liberty of the church, and is exactly contrary to fact. There is no authority competent to give fixity of interpretation, and no authority may be created by a body which makes no claim to having a quorum. What many persons regard as the absurdity in the judicial system of the church—namely, the fact that she has no court of appeals, but that that system is a headless trunk—is an accurate representation of the real situation. A court of appeals, instead of securing catholicity, would destroy it, since such a court could not represent the Catholic church.

It is not necessary to trace in detail the development in interpre-

tation of the theological propositions of the Nicene Creed as the typical Catholic creed, since the present dominant conceptions of the theological propositions in that creed are probably known to every reader of this *Journal*, and are common to the thinking of the whole body of American Christianity, as is also the history out of which they have come. In so far as the evolution and interpretation of theological belief are peculiar to the Episcopal church, they may be said to have been so differentiated in accordance with that regulative concept of the church which has been mentioned. This concept is and must be important in such interpretation and evolution, because it gives to church scholars and thinkers a kind of sense of safety—a consciousness that their own intellectual freedom and the results of their thinking cannot be permanently injurious, because they will always be subject to the corrective law of the church's own life and growth. To the mind of a churchman the right to blunder theologically, if he blunder honestly, is as sacred as is to a democrat the right to blunder politically; for he feels that the free life of the church is sufficiently powerful to restrain and combine in healthful growth the free life of her individual members. The democracy of the church, like the democracy of the state, is safe only as the church or the state is a free and living body. It is for this reason probably that there is in the present theological situation in the Episcopal church a radicalism which is not found to the same extent in the evangelical bodies of Protestantism. The concrete faiths of the Episcopal church root in the all-comprehensive faith in the vital institution of the Father's family, and those theological doctrines which are of primary interest to the church today are the doctrines which are fundamental to the constitutional doctrine of the divine family; namely, God, his incarnation in mankind, the glorious regeneration and salvation of mankind by that incarnation in the perfected kingdom of God. The Episcopal church accepts, in common with American Christianity, the modern idea of God as an infinite eternal Spirit, immanent in the world, which is in some undefined way his creation or outbreathing; the Father of mankind, naturally and necessarily, not by artifice or adoption—the Father of mankind in general and of all men in particular, whose love is the all-sufficient source of moral and spiritual power, and



obedience to whose will is the perfect obligation and destiny of mankind.

This doctrine of God is philosophically the essential and fundamental element in Christianity, and the primary duty, both intellectual and spiritual, of the Christian is expressed in the phrase *ecce deus*. But in the order of time that conception and that duty follow the belief in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, or the incarnation. It is perhaps with reference to the doctrine of the incarnation that there is going on today the most interesting phase of interpretation and evolution. The Episcopal church never held more firmly than she does now the belief in the incarnation as a fundamental fact of Christianity. The religious and philosophic content of the idea of God, and the same content of the idea of man, immediately and necessarily involve a conception of the incarnation. The present experience and thinking of the church coincide absolutely with the revealed message and the revealed life of God in Jesus Christ. That God was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to himself is the unquestioned belief of the whole Episcopal church, of the Broad Church party as widely and as deeply as of the High Church party. Indeed, out of the very necessity and intensity of faith in the incarnation has come that phase of evolution to which allusion has been made; namely, a distinction between the incarnation as a fact and any specific method of that incarnation. Accordingly, the opinion is widespread in the Episcopal church, not only among Broad Churchmen, but among many High Churchmen, that the "virgin-birth," for example, is not of the essence of the incarnation, or necessary to it. Quite recently so eminent an authority as the dean of Westminster, who is a thorough-going believer in the virgin-birth, has declared that it is a confusion of thought to identify the incarnation with that method of it which is known as the virgin-birth. The dean expresses himself as being willing for the time being to leave the question of the mode of the incarnation in the background, and to consider only the doctrine that the Son of God took human flesh, was incarnate, and was made man; and he appeals with sincere hope of conviction to that in the nature of man's mind and heart which the incarnation, and that only, satisfies. It is a notable fact that practically all the theological literature which the Episcopal church

is producing today treats the matter of the incarnation as a spiritual principle and fact issuing necessarily from the idea of God, and from the thought and experience of man, not as a conclusion from a reputed miracle. Perhaps the most important book which has appeared within recent years from a churchman is Dr. Du Bose's *The Gospel in the Gospels*; and though Dr. Du Bose is a believer in the virgin-birth as a literal fact, and much of his thinking is influenced by that belief, he yet treats the whole matter of theological dogma as a conclusion from the necessities of life, and not from a certified miracle or series of miracles, or, as after the manner of Calvin, from the laws of abstract thinking. Only after working through the thought-implications of the life and the character of Jesus does he come to theological captions such as "The Trinity," "The Deity of Christ," etc. One realizes that, in discussing a matter so delicate and so much in dispute as this, he incurs the danger of voluminous contradiction; and yet it may be said with a good deal of confidence that the Episcopal church, though not committed as yet to an apprehension of the incarnation such as has been here indicated, contains a body of men—a large minority, if not (including the laity) a majority—indispensable to the church, because they are doing a very large part of the church's active work for mankind, who do so apprehend the incarnation; to whose thought the virgin-birth as a method is not an essential part of the incarnation, but is to be determined as to truth or falsity by the issues of scholarship; who are satisfied with the philosophical and spiritual apprehension of the incarnation as a necessary postulate of history and present experience. In so far as the virgin-birth seems to them not to be a necessary part of the incarnation, and thus to be out of essential relation to the heart and life of Christianity, they feel that it is pedagogically and morally false to attempt to force it upon the intellect either of clergy or of laity; and they leave it either to be proven by scholarship or to issue again, as it issued at first, out of the intellectual and moral necessities involved in the unique and transcendent consciousness and character of Jesus Christ. They recognize, as scholars must recognize, that the virgin-birth formed no part of the original Christian tradition. They do not argue conclusively from the silence of the first and fourth gospels, and from that of Paul, that it is thereby disproven; but they do

argue that it is thereby proven not to be a necessary part of the doctrine of the incarnation.

And in this particular the Broad Church thought in the Episcopal church does, in accordance with the ideal of history, really exhibit the national temperament and thought in the sphere of religion. To the religious consciousness of our time the doctrine of the virgin-birth is not essential; in other words, it is out of relation to that consciousness. The great body of lay people outside the Roman Catholic church are indifferent to it, and to no small body it is irrelevant, if not slightly antagonistic. That does not, however, mean that the doctrine is not true; but it does mean that the temper of religious thought of this day is very similar to the religious temper in the time of Paul and the early Christians. Religion was to them a way of life; such it is to the religious mind of today. It involves primarily, not intellectual definition, but moral and devotional attitude. We are again learning the first lessons of Christianity; namely, those of love to God and of love to man, of struggle against sin—or, speaking anthropologically, against the beast—and of salvation from sin through obedience to the spirit of God, and through righteousness and service to the brotherhood; which salvation shall become perfect in a restored humanity governed by the principles of the kingdom of God. The doctrine of the virgin-birth was a poetic and scientific attempt to relate the unique consciousness and character of Christ to the natural world. The age of its making was pre-eminently the scientific age of Hebrew thinking. When the early church had come to apprehend the meaning and obligations of the "Way," they next formulated a doctrine of the Person who declared the Way, and related his origin and life to their scientific conceptions of the world about them. The Broad Church conception contains no denial, except here and there in sporadic instances, of the virgin-birth; but it does distinguish between the incarnation as a spiritual fact necessary to our conception of God and man, and the mode of its realization, which is matter to be determined by scholarship and science.

Another interesting evolution of interpretation not peculiar to the Episcopal church, and yet perhaps having a phase peculiar to that church, is that of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this age, which finds it so difficult to make the rigid theological distinctions

of the Nicene and post-Nicene periods of church history, we should expect, as we find, an intellectual impatience with the refined and arbitrary distinctions made, particularly by the Athanasian Creed, in the definitions of the nature of God and of the relation of the persons in the Trinity to one another. Catholic theology was in those days of abstract thinking, in spite of the difficulties involved in the doctrine of God, able to keep itself monotheistic; but the Puritans in America had not an equal ability. Their thinking was decidedly more concrete than that of the Catholic thinkers, and they became consequently tri-theistic. The Unitarian reaction in America could never have spread so widely as it did, or have influenced so deeply the intellectual and spiritual consciousness of New England, unless it had been a legitimate reaction, and had in it profound truth. It made an important contribution to the doctrine of God, and that contribution has now entered into the thinking of evangelical Christianity. The contribution was first made use of by New England Congregationalists such as Bushnell, but it soon entered into the thought of the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches. It has especially influenced Broad Church thought in the Episcopal church. Dr. Vinton and Bishops Huntington and Brooks, by their intimate contact with New England Unitarianism, contributed in an important degree to the infusion of the monotheistic conception of God peculiar to Unitarianism into the Episcopal church; and the result, if it can be characterized at all, though it has never yet been formally stated and is not likely to be, may be perhaps considered as a renaissance of the old conception of the modal Trinity. The arbitrary distinctions in the divine essence and the conception of the relation of the persons, which were apparently so clear to the ancient catholic mind, the modern mind does not conceive of as expressing intelligible thinking, or as having any particular pertinence in the practical application of religious truth to the life of men. The Broad Church thought of the Trinity is content to rest with the New Testament thought of the Trinity. It does not find the Athanasian definition of the Trinity explicitly declared anywhere in the New Testament, but it does find God operating in three ways or modes: as the Creator of the world and the Father of mankind, as the model Teacher and Example of human life divinely conceived and divinely lived, and as the Spirit

and Power by which the life and spirit of the Son of man and the Son of God are to be realized in man himself. This conception of the Trinity of revelation, or the threefold revelation of God, has never been distinctly or officially stated either in the Episcopal church or in any other Protestant body in which it obtains, and is therefore not to be identified exactly with any of the ancient or mediaeval so-called heresies. It leaves definition and description to the science of theology, taking the historical and spiritual principles of God's revelation as sufficient for practical use in making God's love in Christ and God's power in the Holy Spirit known to men.

The immediate question in the theological thinking of the Episcopal church today is that of the method of the incarnation, the one concerning which there is most speculation and excitement. But to the Broad Church spirit and thinking the issue, whatever it may be, is irrelevant as respects the practical application of religion to life, the incarnation itself being not involved in that discussion. But there is another question likely soon to be a matter of discussion which is more complicated, and is more vital not only to thought but to life, and that is the question of the resurrection; for that question is indissolubly connected in modern thinking and feeling with the belief of immortality. Furthermore, as a dogma of historic Christianity it stands on different ground from that of the virgin-birth. Whereas the virgin-birth is recognized as not necessarily belonging to the incarnation, as not the foundation of apostolic preaching, the resurrection is generally so regarded. There can be no question that Peter, Paul, and John—particularly Paul, to whom Christian theology is in deepest debt—did found their preaching upon the fact of the resurrection. Paul goes so far as to say that, if the resurrection be not a fact, Christian preaching is vain and men are without hope. He knew nothing of the Greek doctrine of inherent immortality which later crept into the thinking of the Christian church, and he therefore could have no other ground for belief in personal immortality than the historically accredited resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Fourth Gospel evidently knows nothing of the Greek doctrine of inherent immortality; for it clearly represents Jesus as teaching conditional immortality; that is to say, personal immortality growing out of belief in him and spiritua<sup>l</sup>

identification with him. The issue has been considerably confused by the fact that the Greek doctrine later became almost universally identified with the Christian doctrine of immortality, though it was not the Hebrew doctrine, and apparently not that of Jesus or of the New Testament. The Broad Church movement, by reason of its free and courageous acceptance of the scientific view of the world, has led some individual Broad Churchmen to look askance upon any doctrine resting in the miraculous; but that attitude of mind cannot be said to be characteristic of Broad Churchmanship in general. The Broad Churchman need not be and is not *per se* skeptical, particularly concerning the miraculous which is justified by moral exigency, though he would be skeptical of the miraculous not so justified.

This whole question is too doubtful and too complicated to discuss in an article which has for its purpose to indicate theological tendencies in the Episcopal church, but three facts may be noted: first, that the doctrine stands on very definite and well-accredited New Testament evidence, and is without question the foundation of all of the apostolic preaching; secondly, that Christianity, interpreted apart from Greek philosophy, promises personal immortality only in and through spiritual identification with Jesus Christ as the Son of God resurrected from the dead; thirdly, that there is an incipient tendency to distinction between a spiritual resurrection of Jesus Christ unmistakably manifested to the intellect, if not to the senses, of his disciples, and the conception of the empty grave or of the material resurrection. What will be the outcome of this matter no one knows; but so much is certain, that the Episcopal church, including Broad Churchmen, is absolutely committed to a real though spiritual resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, convincing to the disciples and causal to the Christian church. The Broad Churchman considers the mysterious problems involved in the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension as not susceptible of any definite scientific answer in the light of present knowledge; but he believes that Christianity is founded upon a real resurrection.

The foregoing two cardinal instances of the use of the interpretative function illustrate clearly the process of theological evolution in general. The other doctrines of the creed, such as the ascension, the resurrection of the body, and the more abstract doctrines of evan-

gelical theology, such as the fall, sin, the atonement, etc., are all interpreted in the light both of their spiritual values as life-principles and of modern scientific knowledge. That is to say, they are considered as expressing, though not literally and explicitly, a spiritual truth which is of practical value in the life of men. Even a doctrine such as the ascension, which primarily concerns Christ himself, gets its spiritual value for the modern world by reason of its implications and results for mankind. The modern doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in so far as it formalizes itself today, may perhaps be said to have returned from the mediaeval and Nicene conceptions to the Pauline conception, its practical spiritual value for the modern mind being that it expresses a belief in the continuation of the personal identity of the Christian as he lived and was known among men on earth. The acquiring of knowledge, and of consequent moral responsibility, involved for mankind, as a new departure in the evolution of life always involves, some disadvantage or fall. The "beast," or hereditary sin, is a fact both of biology and of moral character. Man is prone to evil as the sparks fly upward, and needs the power of God, not only to forgive his personal sins, but also to overcome the beast in him. In other words, "atonement," or at-onement with God, is a moral necessity as well as a theological doctrine; its method is left where it properly belongs—to the councils of Almighty God. The Episcopal church has escaped, by virtue of the church idea, any arbitrary definition of the doctrine of inspiration, because she has believed in the spirit of God as operating, not merely in the Bible, but in the history of the divine society, and in the life and teachings of modern as well as of ancient prophets. It is this belief which gives the Prayerbook authority, and which also subjects the Prayerbook as well as the Bible to the interpretative process.

To sum up, if there be among the shifting currents of thought and the manifold interpretations of experience a dominant tendency, it may perhaps be said to be that Scripture, tradition, the creeds, and the Prayerbook are the expression and history of the relation of God to mankind, of God's activity in the heart of man and in the world, and of man's apprehension of and search for God. They seem less likely to be treated as precise and arbitrary forms of contract between the church and the clergy, or between the church and the

laity, and more likely to be treated as divine records, brought together through human agency, and limited as to authoritatively exact expression to the times of their making, of the life of God in the human soul and in the world; yet as symbols forever valid, through the process of truthful interpretation, for the guidance of devotion and of faith, and the upbuilding of human character in the knowledge and love of God as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ—truly born, truly living, real Son of man and Son of God, the Example and the Way, whom to follow in spirit and in truth is to attain to everlasting life and to the fruition of perfect character